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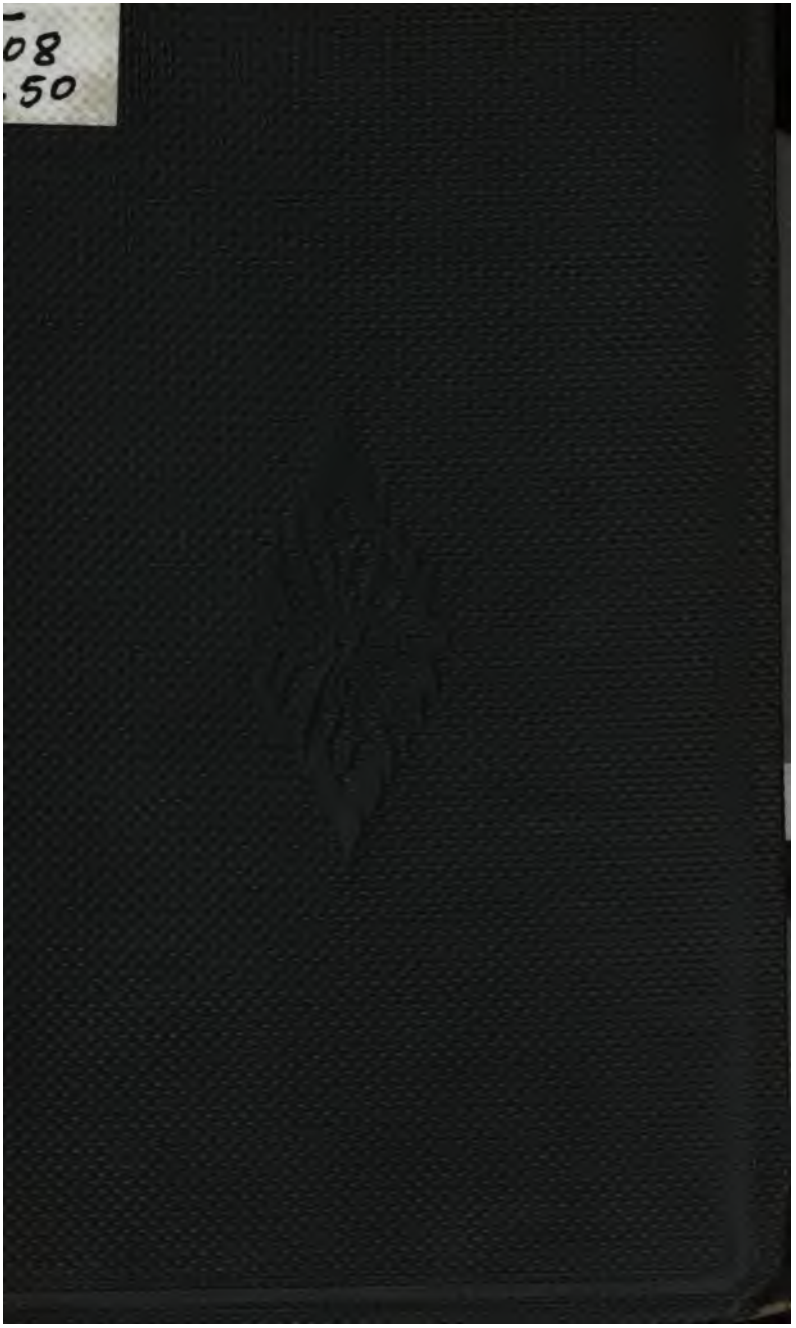

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THE

# WORD OF THE SPIRIT

TO

# THE CHURCH.

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# PREFACE.

THIS little volume proceeds from a design simply to preach a sermon. Its substance has mostly been given in the form of instruction at the West Church; and, but for exceeding the proper limits, was proposed also for a Thursday Lecture. I do not connect my name with its title, because the book itself contains only some hint of the sublime meaning such a title suggests. But I write not anonymously, and disown no just responsibility for whatever I may say. It were needless to inform any reader, that my subject has been suggested by the present state of the general mind upon radical questions of religion; and as I have alluded in one passage to the topic of a discourse by Dr. Bellows, which, beyond most of a similar kind, has succeeded to fame, I ask leave here to say, that, in the whole drift of my thought, I have projected an independent treatment of my theme. It is in no opposition to that gentleman, my most dear friend, that I could anywhere appear. If I take a different direction, as seamen have diverse routes to the same ports in Europe or the Indies, nevertheless I admire the way he has pursued his; and I by no means undervalue his course in presenting, in some sense, a humble counterpart. Seldom, indeed, has the press of this country put forth matter, which, for combination of intellectual power and rhetorical splendor, with frank speech and a good spirit, can be compared with his two recent productions. There is no abler advocate alive

of any point in religion he may lay down; and it may be doubted if any technically Catholic author in the land has argued the case of the church so finely, in its humane significance as well as its logical force. Evidently, too, he has done this with a motive disinterested, purged from all personal aims, and inducing the entire consecration of his energies to the work of relieving, nourishing, and cheering the whole fellowship and body of Christ. As the Roman orator consulted for the republic's safety, he has been anxious lest the nobler commonwealth should receive harm.

Otherwise, though by necessity of conviction or nature I may be constrained to speak, I have no regret, but only rejoicing, in the masterly performance of his undertaken task. Great good to the denomination of which he is a member, and to the church at large, must result from the earnest debate he has had the ability to move. Not from stir, but from sleep, is our spiritual danger; and New-England men, therefore, will thank for his work's sake the New-England's son now their New-York missionary brother. Quite unimportant to him is such open commendation or recognition. He will care for the truth only, and welcome from friend or stranger whatever least sign of its direct shining or faint-reflected light. Yet is it of consequence to all persons in delicate bonds of relationship, so far as they may, to keep the public apprehension in conformity with private esteem. Let this excuse references such as it is no wont of mine to make. May He, whose being is the link of all our unions, lead us into his perfect truth and love!

C. A. BARTOL.

THE

# WORD OF THE SPIRIT

TO

# THE CHURCH.

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EVERY reader of the Bible must have noticed, in the Revelation, the solemn, sevenfold arraigning of the seven churches in Asia by the Voice of that wonderful vision described as appearing to John. This supremacy of the spiritual in religion over the ecclesiastical is asserted or implied throughout the New Testament. In assuming it, however, I design no contradiction of the plea, that Scripture is not our only rule; that the church pre-existing is a co-ordinate power with the Holy Writ it produces. But I affirm the amenableness of both book and body to the Spirit which is their common parent. Proposing no abstract, but a plain

and practical discussion, I shall speak of the *doctrine* of the Spirit as our only authority in its Principle, its Abuse, and the Remedy.

I. Let me treat of the Principle.

There is in every soul, awake to its wants, one question, — On what *authority*, as to the things I should believe and do and hope for, can I rest? Always a question, it has of late been agitated among us with peculiar warmth. According as it is by individuals for themselves decided one way or another, what uprooting of the oldest ties, changing of vital relations, and sudden traversing by human creatures of the whole orbit of their lives, and sphere of Christendom! There are a great many answers to this question, from all the churches and sects, and modes of faith, in the world, — answers resolving themselves into this invitation from every party: "Come with us; we have the truth; all doctrines and forms beside ours are spurious." The answer in the Bible, especially given by Jesus and his apostles, and also spoken or echoed in the depths of the soul itself, admits no authority but that of *the Spirit*. Ecclesiastical authority, of one

church or another, of the church in part or altogether, over the soul of man, does not exist. The church anywhere, local or universal, is but a creation and agent of the Spirit, useful only so far as the Spirit is in it represented and obeyed, accountable to the Spirit for its shortcomings and misdemeanors. So the writer in the Revelation indicts it at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, for actual sins and declensions; noting scarce a single branch of it clean of spot, and none without fearful danger. What a dread list is made out of sins, — of idolatry, impurity, moral debility, vanity, lying, lukewarmness, and failing love; yea, in the chosen synagogues of the Lord! This fact, that the church itself is corruptible, and liable to err, as universal history and experience indeed prove, blows all to pieces its pretence of supreme authority as to truth, duty, or destiny. Whence, indeed, comes its right to stand between the soul and God? Where, in any Romish, English, Episcopal, Congregational, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, or Calvinistic establishment, does any perfect purity or wisdom show the warrant of its business

to command the mind or to order the conduct of men? The New Testament deals mostly with local churches; and a church more or less local is alone available to the soul as an authority in the sense claimed. The church at large is, as Paul writes to Timothy, *the pillar and ground of the truth.* But the fortifying of truth in the world differs from the inspiring of it in the soul; and this text empowers no church, authorizes no concert, to rule the children of God. When the people of any sect or denomination would make proselytes of us, and have nothing better than to say, "Come with us, and join our communion; we alone are Christian, with the warrant of God and favor in heaven,"— then let us reply by disowning any such authority. Even Jesus, with his disciples, insisted not on anybody's following visibly in the same troop. He blamed some of them for rebuking those who chose to do good their own separate way. Let us, in turn, never say to any one, "Come with us;" but, "Go with the Spirit, and come only so far as you can find it here!" Let us heed only such teachers as refer us, not to their creed, their assembly, their style or book of worship, as final or sufficient; but to

the Spirit of truth, beauty, goodness, — the universal, infinite, pure, and loving Spirit of God.

But how very vague, indefinite, and impracticable to most persons, teaching such a generality seems! "You talk of the consciousness of God," said one to a preacher: "I cannot say I ever had it, or that I even know what you mean." So many will ask, "What is this *Spirit* of which you speak? We do not find it. Where and how are we to get it? When you present to us articles in a creed, forms of service in a church, to strike the eye and ear, we can take hold of and be affected by them. But *Spirit*, — invisible, intangible, inaudible, — we are not reached or touched by it; and it will not suffice for our instruction or salvation." I can only answer, Of such lowest ground a rational creature can take, let us beware. Unbelief in the Spirit is the only essential infidelity. I know how men in religion, as all other things, are moved by outward sights and sounds. I know how dim and unreal to gross and carnal minds is internal influence. Ah! with what deep policy the ancient Catholicism has taken, not only affections and faculties, but the *five senses*, under its

charge! *Touch* of holy water, *smell* of incense, *taste* of the wafer, *sound* of music, and *sight* of all gorgeous things, are her recruiting sergeants, sponsors for her votaries, and sentinels at her gates. A late traveller, accustomed to our simplest New-England worship, tells, what is plain to every just observer, how, in a Romish cathedral in Paris, it seemed to her the splendid and noisy spectacle was contrived in every part to draw the soul away from itself, so that it could not dwell on the realities revealed within. I will not undertake to say what proportion of human beings are in so sensuous and irrational a state, that such appeals of swinging censers, choral voices, holy crossings, and solemn masses, alone can win their sacred regard. Let us be at least magnanimous enough to allow that the same mode of religion cannot affect equally all men. Some outward mode is in all cases necessary for social man. The question, then, is not of having any form, but of the sort and proportion of form; its relation to the Spirit; in short, whether our very *forms* shall, as they may, be *spiritual* or not. There is such a thing as a *spiritual form*. In the bread and

wine of the Supper, Jesus meant to establish such a one: for how earnestly he corrected his disciples' first misapprehension, of *eating his flesh and drinking his blood*, by declaring the vital and spiritual sense of his words; thus disallowing and denouncing beforehand the Romish superstition, so inveterate, of his bodily presence in the Eucharist! The form of a man, when the man is intent on carnal pleasure, is a *material* form indeed. But when it is lighted with thought, and sublimed with holy love, while the meanings of the heavenly world flash frequent as an electric summer night in every expression, and are re-enforced with tones of inspiration, how *spiritual!* — transfigured as truly as Christ's on the mountain.

The Spirit itself has necessary external channels, — temples, rites, and appointed days, — as well as a secret apparition. All Christians practically own the need and value of some sensible method and concerted order of praise, prayer, and teaching, for united and affectionate devotion. Nevertheless, we may consistently disown, and discard from our practice, and resist, that imposition of the pomp and excess of ritual which

eclipses the hidden Deity, and drowns his whisper in the heart. Indeed, my aim in this essay is, against all lower judgments, to affirm the existence of a great and growing number in the community, for whom the plainest style of adoration is the best. We, Independents, in our dependency on God, deny that any more of mechanism and repetition and symbolic display than we already possess and use is needful or would be profitable for ourselves or our children. Men are, indeed, still too gregarious. I saw the foremost in a flock of sheep lately sidle from the country road, and leap through a ragged, uncomfortable gap in the wall; and no efforts of the drivers, with whips and exclamations, could keep a single one of the hundred from leaping through at the very same place. It is astonishing how like a flock of sheep we, with all our nobler humanity, still are, as we rush, one vast, emulating, imitative crowd, to the exhibition, the parade, the play, the new engine, the balloon, or oration. Let us not overlook signal advantages in this excitable sympathy, but only be advised of the mischief it must work if it hinder or overweigh our sublimer, solitary

fellowship with God; and aver the legitimacy of a host of religious believers, whose religion is not to part with their personality in the closest accordance of their prayers. They cannot surrender their position. They are far enough from being the majority; but they ask for room!

The question between the Church and the Spirit is, whether corporate power shall have undue ratio in religion. It was the very question between Luther and the pope. Luther, shocked with the iniquities of Rome, as John was with those of the churches in Asia, cast off her authority, and maintained the soul's privilege of immediate access to God. The pope, the cardinals, the councils, said, "No: the Church is *between* the soul and God, vested with his authority. You cannot come to it or have it by yourself alone, or at all, save through our rule." Here was the battle. It is very commonly supposed and declared, that the German reformer fought for the right of private judgment. This, as the best scholars now appear to agree, is a great mistake of his design. He hardly believed in that, or was true to it if he did. Later than his day was it politically vindicated, if not dis-

covered. Even yet we grope after its nature and limits.

But the sublimer principle, that the private soul has an approach to its Author otherwise and more direct than through the church-door, Luther did preach and exemplify, and conquer the right to exemplify and preach; as it is the position on which, in every free body, as our Lord requires, we stand and build. Is it said, "The Holy Ghost does not visit the private soul"? I might reply, Certainly it does not most complacently visit the unloving soul, unconscious of its dear ties with other members of the Father's family, if I did not remember, that, though the loving soul alone may receive it abundantly, it alone can quicken the dead soul to love. But to insist that it can enter these inner chambers of the bosom only through the material courses of our formal connection with, and obeisance to, some external organization, is to revive the despotic claim which all our spiritual ancestry, with Jesus at the head, exploded; and no coming age, according as it is virtuous or enlightened, can abide. We are Protestants in virtue of our negative attitude to the tyranny that would pre-

vent our positive communion with our Almighty Source, and our share of all the riches of life and love, self-sacrifice, toil for our race, and hope of immortality, it imparts. A draught at the fountain, instead of the lower, muddy stream, is that for which we cry. What but private souls, astir with the love of God and mankind, and so refreshing their powers at the spring of all goodness, have been the redeemers of the church and the world? In how many a single, burning, prophetic breast God has chosen his peculiar battery of power!

But will any one inquire again, if this postulate of the sole authority of the Spirit does not vacate that of the Lord Jesus Christ? I rejoin, It *is* the very and only authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the exact authority he asserts and enjoins. Though *he* had, as he said, the Spirit without measure, he cites the Spirit as the only sufficient supply for all. Before the glory and infinity of the Spirit he himself how meekly retires! How he affirms his individuality to be nothing before the grandeur of its revelation; tells the disciples, the Spirit must be their instructor after he should vanish away; and de-

clares to the Pharisees the pardonableness of speaking against him, but not against that Spirit, which was the very power of the All-Holy and Eternal One! How his lesson for all the world is, that to be born of that Spirit, whose only earthly semblance is the strong and boundless wind, is every mortal nature's urgent and inevitable need! Theologians have disputed about the procession of the Spirit, — whether it be from the Father only, or from the Father and the Son. He who was the Son countenances no subtle reasoning about what he takes for granted in its vital force, its open privilege and universal opportunity, in the possible experience of every child of Him who to each asker gives himself, in wonderful communication, more freely than earthly parents make their little presents of bread or raiment or gold. The doctrine, that there is for the soul no authority but the Spirit, is not my doctrine, but that of Scripture and of Heaven, and of him whose very name was the Word of God; he *being*, indeed, always what he *saw* and *said*.

Undoubtedly there are ways and means, as well as a direct illumination, of the Spirit; but

the Spirit is not to be limited to ways and means of any name or kind or number. What the *procession* of that Spirit is, when it began, how far it goes, how many minds or ages it includes, or where it shall end, who shall tell? Jesus did not commence it; historical Christianity did not create it; it is uncreated. All its prophets have never been mentioned to us. To make us more sensible of it is the office of our faith. I can only, in a few poor words, indicate its presence or describe its work.

I beg you, my reader, to consider, then, that there is something in you beside yourself. There is something in the air around you, not of the atmosphere, which the chemist cannot solve. There is a light, not of the sun, lighting every man that cometh into the world. There is a voice beyond that of man or nature, gentler than the softest whisper in counsel to us, and louder than the rending thunder in our remorse. There is a feeling of present divinity, of which we are never quite rid. There is a being we are conscious of above our own, ordaining, supporting, commanding, awing, consoling, teaching, blessing it. In our solitude there is another

with us; and, in our society, One, invited or uninvited, not counted in the list or written on the cards. It is the Spirit. The flash of truth in you, the path of honor pointed before you, the impulse of justice to walk therein, your act of goodness, your abstinent purity, — these are all from it. Your thought of perfect kindness, may God give it! — your flame of holy love, may God kindle it! — your swifter than arrow's flight of ascending prayer, — did you make these with your cunning contrivance, your curious fingers, and of your own potent will? No: the Spirit breathed them into you. Part and parcel of the Spirit they are. They alone are intrinsic evidence, that all your ideas of a great Father's yearning, of a higher state for your departed ones, as being dearer to him than to yourself, are not vanity. I did not make my love: then a higher Love made it, and will justify it for ever. You did not create your own apprehensions of Eternal Purity and Goodness: you, then, may trust and hope in them, spite of sorrow and death, to enliven and save and keep you world without end. They are beams which, followed, must bring you to the resplendent orb. They

are the essential stuff of which the universe is formed, without which there would be no universe; and in them you are immortal and everlasting.

Proofs and confessions of this abound. They afford the most touching tales of all history. Said a wise minister, giving to some younger men his ordination-charge, "When an idea of goodness rises in you, prize it beyond whole libraries of learning." Such an idea *is* more worth than all books and Bibles. Said a wife to her husband, — a man of apocalyptic imagination, like John's, he was, — "Why do you pace round the room, muttering so to yourself?" — "Because," he humorously answered, "I like to talk to a prudent person." But his conference may have been with the Holy Ghost. For we are indeed in no closet or desert ever alone. There is a second person always; or, rather, each one of us is second, and that first. If "one with God is a majority," who may not be in the majority whenever he will; yea, though the people rage, his friends forsake him, and public opinion crucify? Such communion is not always divine. A man may move his lips thus in conference strangely,

when Satan, or some ill demon, is his consulting advocate for the case in hand; but the Spirit of our Father in heaven offers itself for our companion and the mate of our mind. When we accept it, it is the only authority in religion. There is no contradiction between it and the lustre of Holy Writ. Its accents are in unison, as he assures us, with the word of our Lord. All solemn, sincere exercises and authentic divine records are but its remembrances and signs and precious provocations. To refuse it is alone to be faithless, hopeless, selfish, and unforgiven.

But, do you say, "We are not single and separate believers, after all: we are a church. It does not signify in this matter what passes between a man apart and his God. Perhaps there is no road between God and a lonely man. Perhaps we can travel into heaven only through each other's hearts! How does this Spirit manifest itself, seek and solicit us in our union together?" Truly this is the question. "In no disorderly, extemporaneous way," say a host of our fellow-Christians, "but in a set style of worship and fixed arrangement of words." Not thus alone or

chiefly, I reply. I will not deny that living water can run in canals, or stand fresh for a while in reservoirs, like the huge granite one yonder, as well as bubble from fountains and flow in streams. But that it is any better water for its confinement and standing, I am not disposed to admit. That it may become stagnant, who does not know? That, in every basin and service-pipe of meeting-house or missionary enterprise, except for its mysterious and incalculable supply from the cloudy pavilion of God, it would utterly give out, and be dryer than the potsherd Job scraped himself with, or than the ashes among which in his soreness he sat down, what bigoted formalist, save in utter stupidity, can deny?

But it is alleged, that, among dissenters from the Establishment, the tide of devotion is low, if not, indeed, quite run out. Does not a noted Unitarian, in a late letter from abroad, announce it so among Unitarians? Yes; and how many opponents echo and reduplicate the charge! "Oh!" say some to the free congregations, with their spontaneous style, "you do not go to church for worship at all, but to hear preaching, and see what a man, called by courtesy a minister, can

invent with his genius, if he have any, and do by himself." But must not a man or men, in some sense, speak and do every thing, in whatsoever convention? Is the form or phrase of devotion, by a man pronounced, in itself more holy, I wonder, than the periods of a discourse? What rescript from the kingdom ever so declared it? Is not the Spirit at liberty, if it will, to take the *sermon*, too, for its instrument, and pour its treasures of celestial feeling and spotless purpose through *that* into the hearers' minds? Does it not often flood the breast with love, humility, and new resolve, in this very way? Is it not more likely to do so than through the long, monotonous repetitions of the same supplicatory language, against which Jesus warned us, so apt to become mechanical and dead, or through homilies more lifeless and uninspired? Is not all speech of truth a lowly homage and bowing before God? Does shutting one's eyes, or putting a handkerchief to one's forehead, constitute devoutness? Or does it consist in stating and accepting the divine law? Nay, did not Jesus himself, the great example, preach to people, earnestly and at length, a great deal more than

he prayed among them? Are we to insult him by alike rejecting his pattern and despising his word? No; but to pour and welcome religious affection, adoration, illumination, through hymn, address, doxology, benediction, — every portion, however administered, of this real drama of knowledge and praise.

"But the minister does it all," it is scornfully said and flung at the congregational style, wherein there is no general reading and reciting as in a monitorial school. Not so, I maintain, need or should it be. Not so is it, unless to our shame! Silent as a worshipping assembly may be in that living quiet, deep as the hush of death, it is no solitary actor that is engaged in conducting the service. Talk, of one or a multitude, is not the only communion. Many a mute listener is more active with God than sometimes is the loud, swaying, perspiring figure in the desk. Gesticulation and noise are not activity of soul. Often, and most likely when the magazines of heaven are open through the minister's mind, ecstasy of consent and aspiration removes every barrier of the pews. Beside the lips of one poor mortal man that are

moving, all are performing their part. Each communicating soul in the attendant multitude mingles its desires and confessions in the ascription of homage, and receives the answer of direction and comfort and peace.

The Spirit, then, is our only authority. If I were going to name a church, it would not be Church of the *Trinity* or *Unity*, of the *Disciples* or the *Episcopals*, of *Saints* or *Souls*, nor even of the *Messiah* or *Saviour*, dear unspeakably as these titles may be; but of *the Spirit* whence Messiah and Saviour drew. Be we apart or together, let us mind the Spirit. Let us look and listen for it. Let us meditate and pray till it arrive, and unveil itself to cheer us. The reason we do not hear and receive it more is the tumult we are in of other things. Late at night, some time ago, six miles off, I stood waiting near the tower of a village-church. The clock struck. The mellow vibration continued after the hammer stopped, till I was amazed at its long duration. If other earthly noises are not allowed to encroach too much, the Spirit, with sweeter tone than of any instrument, will continue sounding in our souls.

"He that hath an ear," — that is, everybody, — "let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." We all have an ear, deeper than of the flesh, hearkening to something beneath all bells and breezes, tongues or outward motions. It is the dearest desire of my heart, if I know what it is, that we Congregationalists should be a church of the Spirit, in this finer hearing. Our service is called bare and meagre. We must bear the reproach. Doubtless the sonorous, priestly intoning and responding from sabbath to sabbath of the same idolized words (is not the idolatry of words as bad a violation of the command as that of graven images?) would, in the weakness of human nature, win greater crowds, filling the seats, and stir them to a more vivid superficial delight. But would it be spiritual and profitable to the soul? I think not; and I thank God, as a Congregationalist, for our joint success, and our hope still to prosper, without such alluring accessories, not in the gospel, which might convert people to us, and not to him. Let us trust his Spirit. With combined and separate entreaty, let us beseech it. In our life, let us obey it. For the building of our character, unseen

and mysterious as it is, let us rely on it. The stout and aged woods grow from invisible gases of earth and air. Breathing what we never saw fashions and sustains our own fearful and wonderful frame. To this city and Jerusalem of our abode, wide acres yonder, pushing out the tide, are added by a puff of transparent steam, turning the iron wheels that roll hills, interior and out of sight, into sea-side, solid plains to hold up streets and dwellings and courts of the Lord. Could we open ourselves to the working of that marvellous force, which exceeds all the elements of nature and applications of art, there would be a moral result transcending material growth and human structures, as eternal glories shame the triumphs of sense and of time.

II. There is an Abuse to be considered.

I have stated the doctrine of Scripture and reason, that the Spirit is the only authority in religion. I have defined, and tried to vindicate, our old ancestral position. Are we worthy the position? In the Old-Testament story, the ark of the Lord was held by ungodly hands, and the anger of the Lord smote the holder dead.

So many professors of truth come short of the glory of their trust. We pride ourselves in being *Liberal* Christians. But there is a sort of liberal Christian that ought to be disturbed. We are hot in our liberality against rites and creeds, especially exclusive dogmas of fanaticism, and forms of the High Church. We call ourselves spiritual. I am not insensible of the graces of many of the spiritual school. In their purity, piety, and humanity, they are among the best of Christ's witnesses and God's children on earth. But I have now to speak of the disloyal or defective spiritualist, whose so-called spirituality is an abuse. He is a Liberal Christian, graciously accepting the name, and, in the counter designation of Orthodoxy, recognizing only errors from which he revolts; yet he is of very small credit to his own faith. He seems correct on the negative side. He is shocked at such notions as total depravity, moral inability, vicarious punishment, and everlasting woe. He is a very intellectual man, and no one ever accused him of a want of sense. He is a keen critic of other people's mistakes, little as he applies the knife, violently as he may resist its application,

to himself. He sees the truth as with a prophet's vision. But there is no nerve running from his eye to hand. He *does* scarce a trifle of the truth he sees. He is a perfectly religious man in theory. He acknowledges the beauty and the bond of every divine sentiment and law. But he wears his religion quite as uncomfortably as a certain man I knew of did his cork-leg, which he put on occasionally because it helped him to get along to his office through the street; but took off whenever he could, because it made him so uneasy, and did not feel like part of himself.

Ah! if we laid aside all the religion we use simply to further us through this world, how much should we have left? Let us remember the fate of the *wood, hay, stubble.* How thoroughly our gay and zealous friend of theological progress manages to forget! Indeed, this advocate of the Spirit is a singular character. He has no superstition, and no devotion either; he is no bigot and no enthusiast; he curses nobody with his austerity, and blesses nobody with his love; he does not fear God, and does not truly worship him. Very often he is a respecta-

able man, no open sinner, commits no gross excess, has no iron fist or brazen face; but all virtue and all vice alike seem with him to sink and disappear in some vast, empty gulf — like those dry pits that in some places deform the earth's surface — of actual indifference, springing from philosophic unconcern. "Am I that name?" with ineffable tenderness, in the play, asks Desdemona, when her real sanctity had been so unfairly coupled with a vile term. We have plenty of ignominious appellations for our opponents, and many a grand and noble one for ourselves. Witness our sermons, conversations, newspapers, and reviews, in which so easily and cheaply we can run our opponents down, and exalt ourselves to the skies! But, when we use the generous title *spiritual* to describe our own class of believers, how many careless and worldly persons among us, nominally included in the class, might very reasonably, in another way, inquire, "Are we that name?" No; not unless the spirituality goes from your brain to your heart, touches your countenance, enriches your voice, and hallows every member of your body and act of your life with the mighty and gentle

manners that mark the children of God. If you be but a voter for the spiritual faith, a retained lawyer in its cause, a professor of the heart, with no warm heart under the profession, you carry men forward no more than does a painted vehicle, and praise God no more than the show-pipe on the organ.

Therefore, when we thus hold forth the Spirit as the only authority, we must not be surprised if those who differ from and narrowly observe us say, in scorn, "Oh! the Spirit, is it? That can be quoted for any thing!" Nor is it a sufficient reply, though proverbially true, that "the Bible can be quoted for any thing; as even the Devil can, and in human shape does, fetch Scripture to justify his ends." Let us rather honestly confess there is a specious and spurious as well as genuine spirituality. To spirituality itself, in the highest point of new thought and original excellence, no objection should be made. Let us have the *absolute religion* of which so much is said. Of *Transcendentalists*, for five and twenty years, we have been hearing. Where are they? A Transcendentalist, I suppose, ought to be a person who *transcends*,

exceeds, other people in wisdom and virtue. Let us have transcendental love and sanctity. Alas! the misery is, that our transcendentalists are so many of them no transcendentalists, but terribly fail to enact the superior mind and character they preach. The famous spirituality of many is only a *proposition*, not a fact.

In truth, Christianity itself is a religion far more *absolute* than any other which, under such a designation, has been proclaimed. Compare the New Testament with the lectures and discourses in these days delivered to supersede it, and judge for yourselves! Jesus Christ *was* the wondrous truth and goodness of which he told. In his disciples, thus far in the world's history, the manifesto has come nearest to a reality; and no man has proved more manly or divine for fancying he had outgrown the gospel. When our neighbors propound something as better than that, we at least ask the privilege, as lawful for systems as for articles of merchandise, of *inspecting*. In the mock-auctions of a neighboring metropolitan city, articles of jewelry and gold are every week struck off at what to the purchaser seem wonderfully low prices, till he

learns that the precious metal of his glittering new time-piece is pinchbeck, and the lustrous gem cunning paste. Then, on his complaint, lo! what screams of remonstrance and denial to the officers of justice from the detected auctioneer! So when, by some searching mind, dealers in the counterfeits of moral principle are exposed, how they resent the slander of their reputation, and outrage on their sense of character and self-respect! Nevertheless is it needful to guard against all the forms which the bad and hollow spirituality of the day may put on.

At home and abroad, the cry is lifted, that every thing in these times we eat or drink or wear, or use any way for the convenience, comfort, or necessity of existence, — *every thing* is adulterated. We talk of the *order of the day.* Adulteration is the order of the day in our great social parliament of trade. We walk by the shop-window, and see in capital letters, on boxes and jars, the unblushing pledge of a particular manufacture, — foreign importation from London, Paris, Vienna, — the pretended genuine composition of what *is* a base mixture, a forgery, and a poison; and the very dealers, in

what to our children at least is one essential part of our domestic diet, tell us now, at last, that by no possible efforts of theirs can they persuade their agents even to let us have the small allowance of taking our milk and water separate! It becomes a sober investigation indeed, when we must withstand the worse foisting-in of untrue types of spirituality.

Some of these I proceed to name.

The first is the *negligent* type, noticeable in not a few, who, like old Gallio in Achaia, *care for none of these things.* They thank God, and sacredly swear to men, that they are emancipated from the heavy, galling yoke of creeds and forms. They have espoused, for their part, the simpler, spontaneous, congregational, liberal worship. But do they value and support the very worship they have espoused? How much? Two hours a week? Ah!—following out that figure of espousal, — what woman would be content with tokens of regard only equal to those they pay to *their own* portion of that church which is in Scripture called the bride of Christ! How constant is their attendance, and how earnest their attention? Do

they neglect even the simple means they possess? How big a cloud in the sky does it take to keep, not alone the sick and weak, but half the congregation, away? Truly, I fear that is a problem it would cost the mathematical chair at Cambridge, with all its world-renowned genius in meteorology, too much labor to solve! Why do they absent themselves? Because there is no help for them in the sanctuary? And meanwhile, too pious for these courts, are they in their closets and on their knees? Let them answer before God! What dress must they wear, or other fashionable circumstance observe, when they appear? How much heart have they, even on the spot, of fellowship with their fellow-worshippers? Does it astonish and pain to hear such interrogations from the lips, perhaps, of one who is continually charged with being too mild and softly exculpatory of every sin in his discourse? To put the interrogations is greater pain! Very pleasant was it to unfold the principle of authority as being in the Spirit alone, but a strange, unwelcome work to inquire after our derelictions from it. Yet if any of us be selfish individuals, disconnected particles of the

common soul, united in no bonds of affectionate communion, but rather like so many slippery marbles, together only because of the bag or vessel that holds them, and rolling each its own independent way as soon as released, why then the coldest ritualist we denounce is just as good as we, and the revivalist, that copies the engineer throwing pitch into his furnace, has more claim to respect, sublime as may be the *maxims* of freedom and knowledge and toleration, which, as lights of the world, we set forth! Little in the judgment of God, very little at the door of heaven, will it avail a worldly, miserly, and icy-tempered man, that he cast in his lot with the most enlightened and advanced denomination. You who are anywhere, in village or city, called a *society*, *corporation*, *parish*, *church*, ask yourselves what mutual ties, strongly binding and gladly owned, correspond to these names! What vital relation, not to the place, the pulpit, and the minister alone, but to each other, do you sustain?

But again: there is also the *lax* as well as the negligent type of this spurious spirituality, of which we should beware. It is no new thing for

those, thinking themselves saved by their own faith or by grace from on high, to imagine their *morals* no essential matter. "We need a preacher yet to come," said one, "to inculcate simple morals!" What theories about the indulgence of the appetites, the relations of the sexes, the obligations of the married state, and all the show and luxury and pride of life, — yea, under the color of a more elevated and spiritual condition, — prevail among many, who have adopted the spiritual principle, in the sense at least of throwing off all the bondage and law of the letter! Truly, by such, not only all bonds are disowned, but all liberties taken.

Manifold are the demonstrations of this iniquity and disease. It is a grief to allude to the flippant vanity with which, for example, shallow-hearted persons, in print or talk, declaim against faulty popular patterns of adoration and duty, while they themselves, by no grand or lowly trait, furnish the least recommendation of a finer standard. Because they are free from some groundless terrors and old slaveries of inherited opinion, they conceive they are better than any hero of an evangelical missionary or Catholic

saint of the calendar, — any Judson or Fénélon: as though some smooth popinjay of a plaything should in its levity, as it makes little noise, be praised up for a grander utensil than the huge engine that creaks and groans with its ancient service; or some new-painted pleasure-yacht of feasters on their trip down the harbor be preferred to the ship, the ugly barnacles on whose bottom show her voyage through distant deeps; or to the "Great Eastern," because an explosion, not shattering her bulk, has occurred in part of her works! To slough off the dead skin of old habit may be well; but for a spiritual religion, I apprehend, real qualities are required. If there were no life or beauty under the skin, why need a creature be rid of it at all?

It is a bitterness to the soul when educated literary or scientific men fail of that bowing before the Supreme Being, and obeying of his law, which is the only crown of other attainments, however splendid. Without it, other attainments are next to nought. It is almost a discouragement to faith itself to read the page of some English, German, American critic, and

have to say to him, "Your objections are well put; but where are the sweetness and humanity which should wait on your views, so enlarged? Why this towering arrogance and jealous ambition instead? You renounce the bad, and acquire not the good!" It would seem as if we could have no leaders among us in this country who are not egotists. It is alarming to see, in any shape, that worst paradox and monster chiefly generated, as the ethical geologist would tell us, in the most recent periods, *the unspiritual spiritualist.*

"Are there any spirits present?" is the question regularly put in the *circles* of which we hear so much. I will not say it is a question of sheer nonsense and pure folly. I believe spirits of the departed, good or bad, may be present. Whether they communicate or not in the way supposed, is indeed another affair. Of that I am yet to be convinced; although I would rather credit the coarsest spiritualism thoughtful men question and our wiseacres curse than be one of those many Sadducees, believing in neither angel nor spirit, who perhaps crowd so after the best places and sweetest morsels of all earthly

good, because they expect or possess no heavenly! But certainly, without waiting at the table for rapping or writing, for mysterious lights or incomprehensible motions, to the question itself, "Are any spirits present?" we may answer, "Ay, the Spirit you perhaps little thought of, the Spirit of *God*, is present; and all spirits beside in the universe cannot eclipse it, and should not put it out of mind!" That Spirit, glorious in majesty, wondrous in praises, though not grossly manifested, as it cannot be to mortal sense, never goes. It abides to rebuke every carnal way into which our shining premises licentiously open, and to call us into paths of purity, honor, and peace. I have no liking for a long and rigid face of pietism. I account the thought of God a cheerful and smiling thing. But I say, better belong, like Saul before his conversion, to the "most straitest sect" now of our religion, than take a loose privilege of being deaf to that Holy Spirit's word!

But of this pseudo-spiritualism one species remains, that ought to be named distinctively by itself: I mean *the vindictive*. This is the proudest, most pretending, and plausible of all.

Nay, it begins with most sincerely attempting the reform of every evil. But the mighty enterprise, through the mingling of unworthy human passions, becomes gradually inflammatory and inordinate in its steps. The vindictive spiritualist not only scourges the sin: he denounces the sinner; gives him no quarter; pursues him in public as well as in private, by name, and in the sharpest and most scorching terms. With outstretched, contemptuous finger, he points at rents, which we all have, in the robes of his fellow-creature, forgetting there may be in his own, however handsome-looking coat, holes larger and worse, if not the same; and, though he be free from the numerous transgressions he lashes, his very lashing may, and, if without kind affection of which he gives small proof, will, become in the sight of God more odious than them all. "You," said one to his friend, who disclaimed certain habits, — "you have, then, none of these vices of smoking and drink?" — "No," was the reply; "but that old Serpent, the Devil, that crept into paradise, may creep into my soul through some one large passage, as well as through many smaller apertures."

A man's self-deception in his malignity and revenge is space enough to let in the entire retinue of the adversary. To stick knives or pins into the flesh is not considered kind. Is it more kind studiously to hurt and torment the feelings of the mind? No: this is a bad quality. It is made up of conscience, conceit, and hate, without divinity or love. This vindictive mood is confined to no one party. Every one shows it who does not love in his heart the very antagonist he blames. It does not signify whether it is the conservative, who has sometimes declared that he would like to drive the antislavery man, the reformer, like a brute through the street, and would not interfere, or throw him a rope, if he were in the water, to save him from drowning; or the radical, who for ever girds at the dead dissenter from his thought, or, with angry voice and spiteful pen, insults gray heads that are crowns of glory, if we have any on earth, among the living. On both sides, it is antispiritual, or, if spiritual at all, not after a heavenly sort, but that of the place otherwise entitled and described. Speaking without personality, there is a combative character, liable

to its own sins. The American prize-fighter is not the only bully; the Italian, who sells his dagger, is not the only bravo: there may be duellists without swords or pistols, and an assassin with no club or knife. I have seen one hunt his adversary, in full view of the common eye, for a special foible or bad habit, till I thought the vengeful pursuit of any crime or sin the worst of all crimes and sins; for if, imitating the style of the naturalist, we should essay a new classification of offences, we should have to put, not sensuality or bribery, bad as they are, but cruelty, that cuts coolly in two a fellow-man's heart, at the head.

The self-appointed sheriff and volunteer executioner in the spiritual world, like the Hebrew avenger of blood, runs swift and eager after his victim, with thrust and sneer, and laughter-provoking gibes of no good-humored kind. But he does not resemble the Christian. Oh! how far is he from the Christ! God be thanked for *him*, once in the flesh, and his image ever in the world! So sadly tender as well as awfully solemn he was, even in what are called his denunciations! But bitter and inhuman are the sentences

on guilt of those Pharisees, ancient and modern, for whom to be pleased is to persecute. God save us from being of that vindictive class of the falsely spiritual, whose pleasure is in their satire! God deliver me from any satisfaction, God smite me with a holy distress, in portraying their mistakes in periods I abbreviate as much as I can! God pardon us all our partaking of such guilt! We recoil at the theological conceit, that the redeemed in glory find their comfort in the torments of the lost. But I know not that it is any better to enjoy tormenting the life or maligning the repute of our fellow-men on earth, than to delight in seeing their misery beyond the grave. Surely nothing but the hope of defending some against the *abuse* of this supreme doctrine, of *the Spirit our only authority*, could have persuaded me to the scrutiny of morbid symptoms I have made. May the Spirit itself of God and our Father defend us, guide and heal!

III. The Remedy.

Be it said first, respecting the abuse of their own doctrine in the spiritual school, it is all

told by themselves. However other orders of Christians may disclose or conceal their troubles, these people certainly make a clean breast. Little they heed Napoleon's pithy proverb of "doing our washing at home." Rather they point to the soil on their garments, and ingenuously describe every vain attempt at its removal. Such confession is never a signal of the worst. Even the self-imputation of a want of faith, into which a brave brother articulates manifold whispers of doubt, must be taken with this grain of a salt that has not lost its savor. This quality of the lowly and praying publican should never discourage us. Good and saintly men will always lament the coldness or decline of religion. The world is to them ever half a ruin. Said a distinguished Baptist to me lately, "I consider piety everywhere at a low ebb." Before the glorious and soaring ideal, by which we are tantalized and rebuked, our actual faith hangs behind, as from its swift motion streams back the comet's train of light.

The account of the evil is itself a great exaggeration. It is a mistake for even sacred sorrow to become excessive, inspire distrust of

sound premises, and paralyze exertion by running into despair. A tender conscience always overrates the evil in the world. The absolute grief at transgression and defect may not be inordinate, yet its relative statement may miss the mark of general truth. Courage against the world, the flesh, and the Devil with all his hosts, is every sincere man's rightful and only starting-point. "Fear," well said one, "is no argument." What is it, even connected with the ablest intellect, but Polyphemus in his cave, — power without sight? Let us not suspect the spiritual principle, whatever monster may come pretending to be its child, nor compromise it by confounding its legitimate operation with its abuse. If a man issues a book, or makes a speech, containing more gall than belongs to a healthy system, and puts it on the spiritual ground, let us not desert that ground, but inquire whether *he* fairly occupies it. Let nothing scare us from laying our emphasis still on the Spirit. It is our only hope. It has sure healing for every sickness of the soul. As to unbelief, where does every test show its centre to be? Verily, not in the Protestant part of Christendom,

but in Rome! The last dot of the telegraph tells of its fearful spread among the youth of Italy. The French About, with his essay on the Roman question, is but one of a thousand witnesses.

Yet, at every hint of unsatisfied hunger on the rationalist side, how the mother-church — settled on her seven hills — lifts and a little flutters her wings, as if to receive under them more of her wayward brood! She offers us her vote in exchange, if we will give up our immediate reliance on the grace of God. Let us decline the proxy!

For, next, let it be said to her, that unbelief itself is not always bad or wrong. If, from the midst of the scepticism that secretes itself under her huge cover, she sneers at the doubts that go along with our liberty, — as the Bible tells us our liberty goes along with the Spirit of the Lord, — let us reply, that these very doubts may have a good, certainly not a quite melancholy, account of themselves to give. The divinity-student, who went to the elder Henry Ware mournfully to own that he was troubled with doubts, was astonished at the good man's reply, that he had certainly made much progress if he

had got so far as to doubt! Of the very doubts in question, incident in these days to the exercise of our rational nature, we ask, Whence do they arise? In part, at least, from the sublime process, in the light of growing science and experience, not of dissolving, but enlarging, the idea of God. This is to be the religious glory of the coming age, — *a better idea of God!* Our children's eyes will see it, if ours do not.

The old Hebrew Jehovah, sitting on a throne of jealous power and favoring a particular race, does not meet the need of an expanding humanity. The invention of a threefold Deity, to correct that ancient narrowness, jars on the unity shining everywhere in the world and from the human soul. The staggering of the mind, in arriving, through its own upward motion, at the conception Jesus preached of an infinite and universal Father, must not be branded as disbelief. Even any temporary alienation of intelligence into atheism must be greatly laid to the charge of superstition. If the scientific understanding in some quarters of the world wanders from the faith, theological bigotry in other quarters debases it; and who shall decide

been taken! The annals of the church, by unhappy precedents, are put in the way of its progress. Undoubtedly, its vital unity is to be traced and maintained; but of how many a phase and incident in its course is made a bad example! what imperfection in the past confounds or retards perfection in the future! and how mean is the inspiration of history to that of God! When the traditionist points us to some old judgment for a present argument, how often we can hardly help saying, "What a pity he is so learned!" Scholarship itself is a hinderance, if by it the Spirit is made secondary, or kept out. Not what habitually the church has done or the race has done, but what the Lord will have us to do, is for ever the first question. True, the majority of men are but partially amenable to rational words: they must be taught by pictures and ceremonies, whose veneration is but one step from idols of wood and stone. But, before the dawn of reason, the temple-scenery dwindles and disappears. If retained, it becomes pageantry and hypocrisy to thoughtful minds. To return to it, as a medicine for the uncertainty of enlightened men, is to offer to their wounds the

very blocks over which they stumbled. "Fishers of men," Jesus called his disciples; but all men are not to be taken in the same manner. From the nets fitted to take some fish in the sea, others swim away; and cultivated persons in this age can rarely be caught in any ritual mesh. The teachers of such must beware of overlooking the illuminated quality of the constituency they are born of and bound to lead. They must maintain modest customs of worship, not as the vital organs, of which they are but decent robes.

Moreover, Jesus himself proposes no great organization as factor or physician of his disciples. His church was no officered or official corps, but a living fellowship of faith and love. Every visible band in it is by him put, not in, but under, authority. One great stream of power behind, all else in the world is but reception, instrument, and propagation. If it be said, "Authority is not attributed to any little section, but to the general church," we must reply, There is, indeed, a general church; but it is mostly invisible. Its numerical suffrage is beyond our reach: no creed or council ever gave it. Fifty

generations of it are in heaven. According to its sanctification, it approaches to identity with the mind of the Spirit. But its appliance to our need is less appropriate and less accessible than that of the Spirit itself, that waits and knocks, and is ready to come in.

Certainly I propose no quarrel, for I have no discontent, even with the High Church, in its place. I would not unchurch, by unspiritualizing, the church itself, or any part of it, further than it is unspiritualized in fact. I know well, and greatly honor, the numerous and often splendid examples of Romish and Episcopal piety. Better Christians have seldom been made than in those communions. We should only oppose the assumption, that any ecclesiastic ritual is more than a local expedient, has any binding authority for all, or is good beyond certain very strict limits; and let us do so, with regret, somewhat on the ground of that liability to corruption which so manifestly qualifies its value where it is used. Alas! how often its majestic line becomes a mechanical phrase! so that one, hearkening in great foreign cathedrals to the performer's tone of mere memory stereotyped in his voice, sometimes

sadly feels how little, in any touch of spontaneous emotion, it varies from the metallic note, in which the bird called a mino salutes us with the amiable, wearisome, and hundred-fold repetition, from the perch of his gilded cage. An eye-witness tells me he saw in St. Petersburg little children, taught to go through a manual of devotion of which they could have no sense, who, as they rose from the forced bodily conformity of prayer, fell to playing with the silver and malachite railing of the temple. Which was most acceptable to God, — their ignorant homage, or their innocent play? We have been told that the impersonal sort of utterance — after the peculiar, well-known style of the set periods of prayer — strains the voice itself more than the natural tones of any preaching. What could more decisively prove it vicious? Doubtless, solemn recitation of hallowed texts and clauses, to some extent, especially on the recurrence of great experiences of human life, may act, like a galvanic series, to confirm, by multiplication, the deepest feeling. It would, however, seem almost as though the sentences themselves, when so perpetually brought forth after

uniformly equal periods of time, might complain, like tired soldiers, of being too often put upon duty!

Of course, we must not deny the proportion and choice of comparative good and evil from opposite modes in this matter. The advocate of the spiritual way should not blink the arguments that still remain for a liturgy: its re-acting from the people to the priest; uniting all in the same words; with its easy-chair equalizing the clergy, in their gifts or without gifts; coming a precious heirloom from the past, and spinning on the thread of religious unity to new generations; familiarizing the young early to devout expression; and being at least an alphabet of prayer for the yet spiritually lisping majority of men. But here is the point: that, for a large and most important minority, it clearly will not answer or serve; not because they are blasphemers, but because their devotions find in it no sufficient aid. The attempt to join it with the free tones of prayer is a failure: the liturgy eats up the liberty, or the liberty the liturgy; and whenever the soul rises into transport of fellowship with the Father, repetition of appointed periods will seem

to it as impertinent as reading our love for earthly kindred to them out of a book.

Besides, the liturgical is not our lawful, hereditary manner. Our Pilgrim sires, when they broke from it, not only consulted their own necessity, but prescribed, prophetically, for the wants of a multitude of the best of mankind. In some of our churches, and in our old University, there seems, indeed, to be a receding from their judgment, and a conscientious affecting of the opposite style, as likely to reclaim the erratic temper of the time. It is a course dubious of reaching the result at which it aims; and if, as is pretended, spirits with significant tokens reappear, the ghosts of our ancestry may certainly be expected to communicate on this point.

No effectual specific, then, can be found in what were called "the ornaments of religion" three hundred years ago, but have in them no soul-penetrating virtue, and will never generally be resumed by such as have once laid them aside, and really tasted of better things. To the ritual remedy, there is objection enough in the very fact, that its emphasis is on the church, above the Spirit. Where the church

is the first word, or the most frequent, and the Spirit second, and more seldom used, what departure from both Scripture and reason could be more wide and plain?

Nor, next, in places where the gospel has been published and is regularly proclaimed, will it do to rely on *advertising* our religion as a remedy even for the neglect it suffers. By advertising it, I mean wishing to let people know how much we have of it, — affirming our personal or denominational superiority in it. Unpopular parties, alike with those greedy for more popularity, are tempted to this resort. In a community's stupid and stubborn ignorance of what is for its good, it may seem justifiable. The general advantages of advertising cannot be denied. Of men in business it is said, "They failed because they did not advertise." But spiritual goods are of a peculiar and delicate sort, rendering it for them a questionable means. Especially painful is the conflict of invitations from rival ostensible depositaries of that Holy Ghost which has on earth no shop or permanent receiver; nor a less mournful sight, that of religious societies regarding the worship of God

as a financial concern, and judging of their prosperity by the fulness of their buildings and sale of their pews. This fulness and sale may be from reasons more or less religious. There may be a drama or concert in the church, instead of teaching or worship. The meeting-house, however, of which it can never be said, on particular occasions, that " hundreds went away, unable to obtain admission," seems, in this country, considered of an inferior sort.

Information of religious services and intentions, if there be in it no ambition, may be wanted and desirable; but, mostly, quiet work is best. Not with dogmatism, but diffidence, is here offered to others a conviction, strong in itself, affecting customs about which good men disagree. But the continual printed list, to the wistful eye of those in quest of a sensation, of the notable, as contradistinguished from the uncelebrated and less worthy, preaching of the day, is one straw or trifle among many indications of a superficial quality in our religion. Of the three dimensions philosophers designate, we have more *length* and *breadth* than *depth*. There is great want of cubic solidity in our piety and

virtue. The convention, the association, is good; but yet more needful is a seeking to the Spirit with earnest thought. There is a communion without conversation or spoken word. Religion is not a beggar, to be patronized; but a prince. So let it be shown and served, and its riches and favor received.

Diverse are the manifestations of the error we should shun. Vulgar appeals to publicity for articles on hand, and stirring up temporary excitements about religion as an interest separate from life, alike lower the dignity of the pulpit. Feverish heavings of the general heart, called "revivals," — which set everybody running away from his house and affairs, where his character should be reared and disciplined, to look after his insulated soul, — may be necessary to men engrossed in the world, or dead in trespasses and sins; but, like rude shifts to get out of the mire, should be thrown aside as soon as their feet touch firm ground. When we read placards of prayer, — "Come in, stranger, five minutes, ten, or fifteen," — how we think of him who posted no such bill, rebuked the Pharisees' phylacteries and street-devotions, and said, "When

thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut the door"! The late unprecedented religious commotion in Ireland, whatever moral benefits may attend it, has run so much into the form of a bodily malady, that the physicians have had to interfere.

Let us have less of talk and physical emotion, —more of trust and peace. The great institutions of society should, like ships of burden and deep draught, move calmly on the tide of time; by their own gravity, and the weight of the interests they foster and represent, drawing the attention they deserve and will reward. Let there be zeal in their behalf, if not fitful and crackling, steady-burning and according to knowledge. Let scholarship, genius, and eloquence enlist, indeed, in the cause of piety; and let the winds, after the law of moral acoustics, blow what rumor thereof they will abroad: but solicitation of regard for our particular conventicle looks too much like gasping for breath, or desiring public pity for a precarious enterprise. Let us not, even to keep out of difficulty, advertise our piety or truth: let us sink and vanish from the earth sooner! It was

well intimated by that soul of singular insight, F. W. Robertson, that self-advertisement is the last resort of a feeble cause. The hypocrites of old blew their trumpets *before* them, because there was in them no strength of character, — no march as of a celestial host. Troops on parade are noisy; but, as they go to battle, they are still.

No doubt, there may be an assertion of our claims consistent with humility, and for the sake of the service of God. There are not wanting ethical counsellors to assure us, on the highest grounds, that we must be bold to take our place and raise our voice, else of the greatest merit there will be no heed. The world, it is said, will allow to us the position we seize. Truly a morality after the Louis Napoleon kind! We cannot mistrust the motive with which a European teacher told an American seeker for wisdom, "You friends of progress do not put yourselves enough forward. People would flock to you, if you more confidently assured them of the truth and good you possess." But will not truth and good be seen of themselves, without being so carefully and wilfully bolstered? How can the

sun be hid in a corner? "How," exclaimed Plato, "can a man be concealed?" All boasting cheapens. Our most pithy proverbs teach, that, where there is most exclamatory laudation, the substance falls short. A man was seen, on the last Fourth of July, at the edge of the Common, beating a drum, and stoutly declaring his purpose to summon all flesh; but it was to a miserable wax-figure exhibition. The grandeur of nature, the beauty of truth, the glory of genius, and the ecstasy of devotion, omit the drum! Let us rejoice in the mutual amity, in this land, of the pulpit and the press,— the theocratic power and the third estate; and that neither has felt the chains they wear in Italy and France, and so widely through the earth. Let the pulpit and the press honor and uphold each other; but let not the former ever come to the degradation of being suspended on a paragraph, while the latter maintains its independence of any ecclesiastical behest.

This caution would not here be so insisted on, but that it goes to the heart of all reality and worth. A single aim is the rare excellence; and daily events show private honor the most

important and imperilled virtue. Where so much, as in this country, is determined by the popular voice, we are in danger of holding all dependent on it, and of presenting every thing to the popular eye. But supreme excellence is not by hand-vote, and never a creature of the majority. Much of the most conscientious and durable work of the true architect is out of sight. At the foundation of the edifice, and on the back side of the pillar, in groins and arches of his structure, he toils and carves as on the portal and the shrine. So is it with the builder of the spiritual temple of God in his own and others' souls. Never with ostentation is a holy man's effort. In religion, especially, let us be on our guard against the self-blazonry which is the epidemic of the day. Let us have no reference, in what we do or say, to the suffrage or the clap. Let us never commit the old sin of numbering the people who are with us. Let us toil, and not tell of it. Let us pray like the saintly woman, who, to the inquirer after her secret prayers, had none to speak of. Let the doings of our right hand be such as the left is not acquainted with. As there were once professors

of poverty, let us be lovers of obscurity; and we need not fear the Just One, God, will ever throw away our deed.

We may, on this high spiritual basis, have small congregations. But for small congregations something is to be said. That was a small one in the upper chamber at Jerusalem; a small one of dispersed fugitives after the resurrection of Christ; a small one — only about a hundred and twenty — met to complete the number of apostles made vacant by the traitor's fall; and a small one on the day of Pentecost, till the noising abroad of the miracle brought the multitude together. But what great congregation, with its ephemeral, out-of-door admiration of some stirring, declamatory word, ever moved the world like these?

The conclusion, then, is, that, for all the corruptions incident to our religion in human imperfection, there is no effectual remedy but just to *try* the religion itself. Every thing, from David's sling to the prophet's roll, must be tried. Let us try our religion in its own authentic, spiritual characteristics; which are external simplicity, social loyalty, and personal fidelity.

First, *external simplicity*. The great mistake to which rational Christians are now exposed is that of seeking an antidote to the ills of their own constitution in imitating the complex ways of other bodies. Is not the true wisdom, instead of aping, rather to offset these with a strict simplicity? What but this is the undeniable trait of the New Testament and of the early disciples? How poor and provisional indeed, and in what low adaptation to the weakness of human nature, is the reason, originally and always, for any disfiguring or abnegation of it! Authentic history informs us how, in the times of that pope-king, Henry VIII., the forms of the English Church were devised and copied from the Romish, precisely on account of the gross ignorance of the clergy. Ah! what need we more than the hounding persecution by Henry's daughter, the Protestant Elizabeth, of many of her subjects, for not Romanizing sufficiently for her policy in their worship, to dissuade us from all bondage to such forms, even did we not recoil from the first low ground of their practice? Let us, at least, have dignity enough to respect our antecedents and the root

that has borne us! Let us, in the line of the Pilgrims, — which God grant may never be broken or run out! — worship in simplicity. What and exactly how much appeal to the imagination and taste, by architecture, music, painting, and statuary, may consist with religious simplicity, we may not presume to decide: only that none can do so, which overlays the fundamental feeling; nay, which is not quite subordinate and incidental to the grander spiritual exercises of thought and love and homage in the soul.

The tendencies of the age are irresistibly to this very point. The interruption for centuries now of the finest of all specimens of cathedral-building at Cologne; the unfinished state of many a little modern edifice, vainly attempting a splendor resembling that of more ancient temples; the dependence on a precarious pilgrimage of St. Peter's itself for costs of repair; with many a sign beside, — indicate the age of the magnificent structures of piety as passing or past. On a fair consideration of the reasons and issues of this, — in a finer development of the soul come to its manlier estate, and, for

loftier motions of love and truth, putting comparatively childish things away, — we shall find it no subject of bitter regret. It were a foolish inference, that piety itself is therefore failing, or ever going to die. It may have, with plainness, exquisite proportion in its shrine: but it does not, for its life or excitement, rely on aisles or arches; on the sheafed pillars, like wheat-bundles in the field, that support them; on sculpture bending from the niche; or the stained window, that lets in the discolored light. Nay, even for the imagination, beside this fine tuition, in a primary school of the chisel and the brush, there is an inexpensive and inestimable education, in the forms of nature, in the course of Providence, and the wondrous events of our faith.

We may lament the decay of sacred art; we may cry shame on the selfishness that lavishes luxury on a private dwelling, and leaves bare the holy walls; we may think Ruskin's "lamp of sacrifice" burns so fair, 'tis pity it could not be lighted in all our sanctuaries: but, for some generations now, the essentials of worship have proved their independence of its show. Our

Christianity is hereafter to be sought less in its splendid isolations, and more in its unseen pervading of human life. Its temple and altar to God are becoming such as they are described in the famous doxology: —

> "To Him whose temple is all space;
> Whose altar, earth, sea, skies."

Its spiritual simplicity must be asserted as one of its chief attributes. Our thoughtful Channing gave, as the cause of his declining to preach at a certain dedication, that he could not express such interest in the fine building as might be desired. There is, indeed, a higher concern! Jesus Christ does not seem to have expended much admiration on even the goodly stones of the matchless edifice which he declared must come down, and greater than which he pronounced the divine humanity, whose figure stood so mean under its glittering height.

Great, indeed, is the struggle to which this simplicity of the Master puts the follower's soul. As it was said, only Jove could touch the thunder with his naked hand; so many will argue

that the lightnings of truth in the spiritual world must be folded up, instead of being received or wielded in their unmitigated, flashing strength. But our Lord himself, while using for the dull of heart many a parable, plainly apprised his friends of his expectation, that they, and all truly believing in him, should hold letter and symbol in an ever-diminishing proportion to his direct sense. The great argument of numbers will still long be on the other side, and against such simplicity. But what Pagans are we, if to that argument we yield! The lesser number must be not only counted, but weighed, or our sum is not proved.

Next, we must try our religion in its *social loyalty*. What imports, is the communion of its votaries, not the circumstances in which they commune. If great principles bring them together, though only two or three, they are a church, in a catacomb or a barn, or a cave on a hill-side. An increase of common interest in the objects of its association would augment the prosperity of any local church, more than all the lures of style and manner it could hang out as banners to attract the public, and distance

competitors in that race of popularity so universal in this land. It is indeed mournful to remark the wide lack of this loyalty, to witness the slight attachment of multitudes to the spot of their fathers' labor and sacrifice, and to the seats where the shadows of departed kindred still linger, as if even the Indian virtue were not ours; and to note, in the easy strolling of crowds from place to place, the proof how little many persons even imagine themselves united to carry any purposes, or to be after aught more than the temporary diversion of their minds. More conspiring in every tribute of homage, more co-operation in every work of charity, verily we need.

In fine, and above all, our remedy is to try our religion in its main attribute of *personal fidelity*. The most beautiful and promising arrangement without this is but a cloak, and not the cure. "There is too much individuality; there is not love and fellowship and social intercourse enough," we hear it loudly complained. Verily, strange terms of accusation! As if individuality were disintegration and dissolution! The more true individuality, the more

union. We do not find fault with the chemical atoms, that they are too decided atoms: they combine all the better. So the Broad, yea, the Universal Church, when it comes, will be a combination of souls, all the more fast together for their separate sincerity and truth. There is, no doubt, an ungracious individualism, the farthest possible from true individual culture or perfection. But the great want is, not simply more conspiring together in this or that design, — wise or foolish, good or bad, — but better men and women to conspire. May the Lord multiply individuals of the right stamp, in all personal faithfulness!

Individuality indeed! Is not the love itself that binds us to God and our fellows intrinsic part of our genuine individual being? It were not worth offering to God or one another, unless it were. Will a sacrament, without the sentiment, of brotherhood, make a Christian's love? No more than free papers, without freedom in his heart, will make a slave's liberty. We must beware of a delusion from names. Not they who most mention sympathy may have it most. Nominal saints are not seldom less lovely than

confessed sinners. "Do not marry a philanthropist," said to her friend a woman who had seen of the fraternity some that did not manifest the feeling they professed. Of all things, bring not the Spirit's effectiveness into doubt. When its organs appear, no more plainly will a hammer prove its office to drive nails, or an engine its fitness to draw the train, than will they vindicate its use.

What alone we should wait and look for is the incarnation of the Spirit in the shape of living men. Most significantly is the *Incarnation* a great doctrine of our faith. But was it, as theologians suppose, summed up, quite ended and exhausted, in the Lord Jesus Christ? No: perfect as it may have been only in him, it re-appears in every daily beautiful life. We are sure of the virtue of no system till it has been tried. The idealist is shocked at the offspring which, from his own doctrines, human passions sometimes bring forth. But, wherever the Christian Spirit is reproduced, the Christ himself is present and lives on earth. Defiant, ungracious, and warlike heralds in the name of the Spirit may stand up, and hurl forth their message as a

missile; but the Spirit disowns them. If the Holy Dove offer to descend into their assembly, how soon it averts its face, and flies from their levelled gun!

Yet, without violence or wrath, this personal fidelity must be evinced in trying the application of religion to life. The old notion of the supremacy of the pope to the king was the shadow of a truth. All secular affairs should obey the divine law. The church on earth is valuable so far as it enacts and induces such a result. This universal and unlimited obedience it is the pulpit's business to hold forth and require. It sometimes renounces it in part; but it cannot be excused, anywhere or in any thing, from this paramount task. It is sometimes blamed, and may be at fault and blameworthy, in its method of performing it. It is reproached with preaching politics. If it violate the decent neutrality of political parties, or grieve the conscience of good citizens for their honest opinions' sake, the reproach is deserved. It does not belong to its province to take sides with antagonist sets of hearers. Yet does it not fall within its sphere to enjoin integrity,

veracity, and purity in civil life? Does it break any fair friendship or true honor in rebuking falsehood, bloodshed, and bribery, and in deprecating the spread of inhumanity and slavery? Nay, the servant of the Lord, who is dumb when Iniquity stalks abroad, and Tyranny sets up her standard in the guise of Freedom, and who peradventure condemns other servants because they speak, abdicates his office on the spot, and subjects himself to impeachment at the final bar. If there be certain departments of legislation, society, and business, which are clean outside the domain of religion, what little corner of this universe shall she find, like a muezzin crying to prayer, to announce in the ears of men her commonplace generalities, — "Read your Bible and say your prayers; be good and do good!" In this position, her privilege is gone; her voice is an abstraction; her sphere, a mystery; her teaching, a scheme; and her utmost skill, while the earth is groaning and travailing in pain for the manifestation of the sons of God, to keep things as they are. Not long could she live and abide on the earth, with no other function but this. Nay, she were not

here, but long since extinguished in her blood, had she discharged no other!

It is said, "The sacred desk should confine itself to the themes of gospel-salvation, as Paul and Jesus did." But what was it Paul and Jesus did? They applied religion to life in Judæa, and far and wide through the heathen world. Were they alive now and here, would they but refer to habits and theories once prevailing at Jerusalem, Ephesus, and Corinth? or apply religion to life in Boston, and wherever they should go? Ah! religion, that with them was so vital and real, has become too technical and traditional with us. It is, indeed, now soberly alleged, that our religion was completely made for us and finished eighteen hundred years ago, with a curse upon him who should add to or diminish it by a tittle or jot. But was it concluded verily in literal terms, and in so many words? Do we not read that the *letter*, even of the Bible, killeth?

To the grand tradition of our religion let us cling. But to hold fast to all the occurrences and decisions of ecclesiastical annals from the first, providential and saving as they may have

been in their several times, would be like tacking to any tool, instrument, or steam-apparatus, all the rude beginnings of invention which improvement has, one after another, successively displaced. Yet this is what the ecclesiastic agents would have us do! The immortality of truth is in its new applications. They may be sometimes hazardous at the outset, like those of science to art, in the ship, the railway, the telegraph, and the balloon; but they will be safe and blessed in the end. What applications among heathen fanes and idolatrous symbols, under the edge of axes, before the shadows of crosses, and at the gloomy mouths of dungeon-doors, fronting the pagan splendor, were made by the original Christians! We need to reperuse the tale of those glorious old martyrdoms, which a word of compromise, an act of concession, a pinch of sweet dust on a flaming shrine of Jupiter, a bending of the countenance before a beauteous image on the wall, or one assenting motion of lip or finger, might have spared. But the sufferers could not afford so much! Thank God, and thank the sufferers, that they could not! It is not for us to vie

with them after the very same fashion of courage and self-sacrifice; but our own applications, at every risk, and with all consecration and denial of ourselves, let us make. Then, as the cedar, though cut and sawed, and transported by land and sea, loses not its savor, but salutes us with its sweet fragrance even by the waysides of business and across the dusty pavement, trodden under foot, and ringing with the wheels of travel; so every act of our career shall be genuine, and smell of the tree of life.

Whoever would be under authority, just, saving, and supreme, let him hearken, then, to the Spirit. Everywhere, without us and within, to the open ear eternally sounds its oracle. Its rule is no easy one to live by, even for an hour. It emancipates us into no license of personal folly. It remands us to unfailing reverence for all it has done through every instrument, and uttered in any mouth, since the world began. It is its own evidence, and has no witness but itself. It can be caught in no system ever by theological mechanics put together. It escapes the limit of all forms and formulas. From the audience-chamber of the breast, from the bosom of human-

ity, from the fresh work and from the old word of God, it speaks; while truth, holiness, and love are its invariable dictates. No new ecclesiastic policy it issues, no modern sect bids us join, to meet no ancient association does it order us to wheel round; but to be living branches of the Christian vine we grew from, good members of the race we are born in, and docile children of Him by whom we are begotten. It asks not who is orthodox, but, as in the case of Nathanael, who is honest and without guile. It accepts not the person of the Liberal, but of the loving and the just; demanding to *what* and to *whom* we are liberal, what our liberality is, and whether and how far it is to our own errors and sins, or to other men's. At once it breathes new inspiration, vivifies long-standing records, and brings to remembrance the teaching and example of every heavenly prophet and ascended saint. Truly is its name and type the atmosphere. Like that, it is not only in us; we are in it: and what the outer element is for a while to our perishing body, from its boundless spread and eternal purity, this finer air will be for ever to our soul. In proportion as we breathe it, abuses

will disappear as diseases do, less from drugs than from a healthy clime.

For the Spirit, then, be our prayer. It may be said, "However well spirituality may be in its place, we need ecclesiastical policy too, and a social league, in order to any effect among mankind, and to draw us away from the hurtful seclusion and impotence to which an over-spirituality tends." Let "honest arts" of plan and contrivance certainly be employed as far as they can avail. Let it not, however, be supposed that the Spirit is not a worker hitherto, Sundays and every day, and of all workers the chief. Out of what solitudes, hermitages, and closets it comes, in shapes such as Jesus from the wilderness of the Jordan, Paul from Arabia, and Luther from the monastery, to disturb the minds and manners of men, to revolutionize and uplift the world! How it burns up the wood, hay, and stubble from heart, house, and street! Institutions that we talk so much of are its consequence, not its cause. A man is sometimes — in the world's annals has been ten thousand times — more than a college, and, as an organ of the Spirit, communicates better lessons than

a library or a university to his race. In that common supplication, sometimes appointed by Christians for "an outpouring of the Spirit," let us first of all, and most of all, therefore join.

This statement of the doctrine of the Spirit, as the soul's only authority, disowns not, but alone accommodates, the fact, power, and value of the church in its subordinate place. The church is itself a vehicle of the Spirit, but not the only conveyance. It has no refusal of the Spirit; no right to countermand its unofficial appearance in any person, or to contradict its inner and immediate gift. The use of discussion is simply to set church and Spirit in proper relative proportion, as ideas in our mind, and forces in our life. To allow the church precedence in our thought, till the Spirit becomes a rare conception and unwonted influence, is no more an offence to reason than it is a departure from the Lord Jesus, who dates and derives all from it for himself, while unto it he enjoins his followers' main resort.

If it be said, "This direct access to God is a barren notion, because, as Christians, we are in and of the church, mere heirs of its property, and, but for it, our pure individuality were a spiritual nonentity," the reply is, Of course, our approach to the Father is *in* the circumstances of his providence; our ecclesiastical fellowship, like our kindred blood and social ties, is one of those circumstances; while all things — birthplace and human friendship, and the earthly personality of Jesus — must be construed as but circumstances in comparison with the sublime and matchless reality of our Divine Source. Besides, one medium of grace as the church may be, it is not as from a local and temporal ruler that its own communication is most vital and abundant. It is called an organization; but it is before and beyond what we call its organization. Doubtless it can and must organize itself, or be organized by the Holy Spirit in its members' hearts. When organized, truly what multitudes and majorities of individual men lean on it, drink from it, are attached and built into it, like the thousands of marble statues that adorn some of its edifices, and centre in its very

shape their hopes of heaven! But because of ignorance is such stopping with it as a finality for mankind. This is not the true state of the soul. Practically necessary as it may be, it is bare initiation of better things, which should be earnestly asserted and predicted, and brought to pass.

Is it, however, stigmatized as quite visionary thus in general to esteem the soul, instead of regarding the wants of actual men and women, to whom the church will always be the way? and is it alleged that so highly spiritual a doctrine overlooks the broad distinction between ends and means? In religious matters, I answer, this distinction holds but poorly and in part. The ends of truth, goodness, and holiness, are in their means, and inseparable from them. In this lies the beautiful verity of Herbert's hymn: —

> "In all I do, be Thou the way;
> In all, be Thou the end."

Will it be inquired if the doctrine I have maintained does not leave all to the mercy of private judgments and the vagaries of individual opi-

nion? I can only affirm, in reply, the existence and operation and accessibleness of the Spirit itself, above all these, to illuminate and correct. Oh for more intuition of its light! Behold what mighty minds are, in their conceptions, so under the laws of space and time, that they can imagine heaven itself only as remote beyond Saturn and the sun, instead of pervading the world, and being the altered aspect of the universe to the disembodied soul! Is it objected, again, that the Spirit has been tried among us so much, that it is at least timely to call attention to the important and neglected functions of the church? Ah! is it not precisely because the Spirit has been tried so little, that the church has so prevailed to eclipse it, as, with its overweening and apparent size, the dull and small moon does the splendid magnitude of the sun, from which it borrows all its light?

Yet who will not cordially confess his obligations to the visible body of Christ, marred and crucified like his own mortal body as it has often been? Verily it is that *without* which we might have been left in the dark. If we can have a more living and inspired church, how

even the infallibility ascribed to it would be approximated by the fact! Meantime, let us acknowledge and affirm our membership in it, such as it is. We will not, indeed, give up to it any advance of thought or criticism, character or humanity. Where but *in* it, if not wholly or always *of* it, have we made this advance? We do not return to it, because we have never separated from it. We should as soon think of returning to our kind! We are branches, never cut from the trunk which has grown out of the seed Christ dropped in Judæa, any more than from the stock of human nature. The church is not an audibly praying and praising company alone, within the walls of one or ten thousand buildings; but it is all Christian society and civilization. Therefore James Martineau's late letter on the Unitarian Position, although to some it may seem to gain in words its distinction between church and society only by narrowing the sense of things (for is not spreading theological truth the proper business of man in the church? and do not men associated for such an object truly accomplish church work?), yet, in its affirming the unsectarian character of the

church itself, is admirably courageous, catholic, and grand. We are born in the church. We cannot be rid of it more than of our mother. We did not make it: it has rather had a hand in the making of us. Therefore we cannot, in our debates, quite comprehend it, as we cannot put any vital relation into our understanding; and the vitality of every relation would cease if we could. Let us assume our church-membership, and look on all attempts to exclude us with the innocent and extreme surprise with which a distinguished American statesman, of world-wide fame, regarded the attempt to thrust him out of his political party.

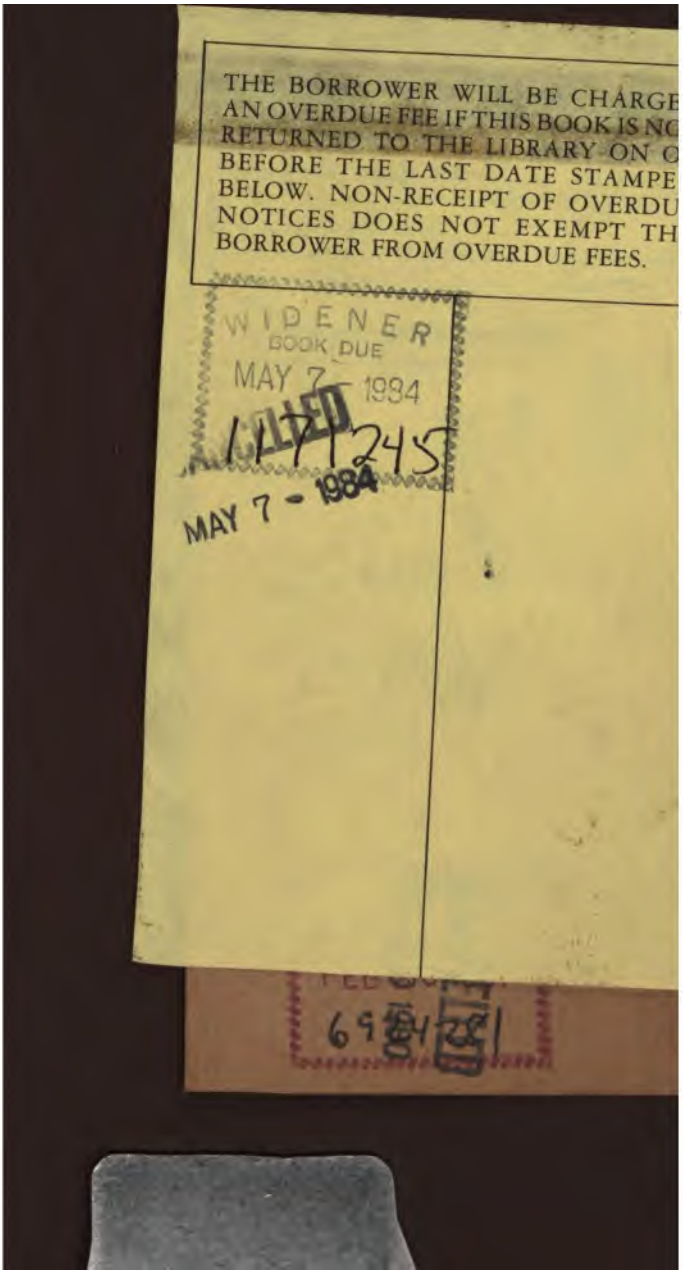
Well will it be, if thus in some measure, as well as by more mysterious agency, the life of God be sustained in our breast; well, if technical views of redemption give place to real. Yet how recently, on a notable occasion, the everlasting deliverance of a human soul was imputed to an understanding of the "scheme" of salvation; and the terms of philosophy substituted for an incarnation of the truth, as the ground of acceptance with God! Amid such theoretic errors, which turn religion into an

abstraction, what is our first business but to insist, not on explaining or manipulating, so much as living, the gospel? Let us all, ministry and laity, do our Christian duty where we are, in our particular churches and communities, and to every one that has with us, far or near, among friends or down-trod outcasts, any tie. We shall then find ourselves indeed in that fellowship, not of the will of the flesh, which no man can number, and from which no man can put us out. We shall, under God, be unawares creating the church in which we believe. We shall not credit his possible failure to carry forward his cause. Our faith will not fail; for *thinking* it fails is the only failure to which it can be exposed.

*The Spirit before the church*, in time and thought, in order and power, — such is the sum and conclusion. Especially in prayer is this principle plain. The tones of voice, when many sing together, may be natural; but rarely when they *audibly* pray together. Therefore is it best that the spirits of all should ascend in one utterance, which the Spirit may articulate or accept. Of the Spirit, eternity is the attri-

bute: immortality is that of the church. Our idea of the Christian Church — that living communion of faith and love which our Lord established — will depend on our idea of *him.* If we look on the importance which has been assigned to him in the world as an accident, impertinence, and illusion of the eye, we shall endeavor ourselves, or expect some coming man, to prick the overblown dimensions of the sphere that still bears his figure through the space of ages above all beside, and brings it meek and lowly to every waiting soul. But if it seem a more hopeful enterprise, by our little machinery to cause the vast airy vessel of the solar system to collapse on its way, then his will be to us, as by the apostle it is called, an everlasting kingdom, — the same that prophet foretold and psalmist sung, and in which the Spirit is manifested, though not spent.

THE END.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